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This publication is designed to provide general information on the selection interview. It is distributed with the understanding that the Department of Workforce Services is not engaged in rendering any legal services. Although this manual is prepared by professionals, it should not be used as a substitute for legal or other professional advice.

SELECTION INTERVIEWS

(Initial and Promotional)

I. Purpose of the Guide

The purpose of this guide is to provide supervisors and managers that have the authority and responsibility for conducting employment interviews and making hiring decisions with guidelines, suggestions, and recommended interview techniques that are effective, fair, and within legal boundaries established by law. Interviewing and selecting the best qualified person to fill a position is very important because the cost of poor selection includes decreased efficiency, low morale, high absenteeism, and frequent turnover.

II. Qualifications of the Interviewer

Selection of the best candidate for a position is largely the responsibility of the interviewer. Therefore, the interviewer should possess a wide variety of skills and qualities such as:

1. Knowledge and understanding of the position being filled
2. Ability to make an immediate and accurate record
3. Alertness
4. Ability to make fine distinctions
5. Ability to make fairly good estimates without benefit of special instruments

6. Freedom from prejudice or habits of interpretation

7. A measure of serenity

III. Objective of the Interview

Assessing the applicant is the most important objective of the interview. The successful interview should also give the applicant information about the job and working conditions in the company. It should create goodwill in the applicant toward the job and the company, even if the applicant is not hired. The interviewer wants to ascertain whatever job-related evidence the candidate can provide to show he/she can perform the job and with what degree of success.

IV. Systematic Approach to the Selection Interview

The most effective approach to personnel selection is one that is systematic and embodies all basic principles and techniques known to be necessary for sound personnel selection. There is a fundamental difference between a systematic approach and the ordinary interview. Too many interviewers do not know precisely which areas to explore and exactly what to look for. Establishing a systematic approach to the selection interview process includes the following steps:

A. Steps to Take Before the Interview

1. Prior to posting the job for hire, review the written description of the job. If one has never been written for the position - consult with your local Workforce Services Employment Center. (See Appendix I for a sample job description.)
2. In reviewing the job description, you should extract

six to ten major tasks of the position. These tasks

should be the critical parts of the job. Based on these key tasks, you should be able to identify the more important qualifications for the position, and then determine how you will measure those qualifications through the interview process.

3. Set your minimum limits and then consider them carefully. For example: Is a high school or college education mandatory for satisfactory completion of duties? **BE SURE YOUR MINIMUM STANDARDS ARE BASED ON TRUE NEED . . . NOT BIAS. OTHERWISE YOU MAY LOSE THE OPPORTUNITY FOR A QUALIFIED, STABLE EMPLOYEE.**
4. Review copies of the candidate's application, resume and cover letter. Or, ask the Department of Workforce Services for the pre-screened applicants.
5. Select a quiet place for the interview, one that is free from interruption. If you need more privacy, reserve a conference room in advance at the Department of Workforce Services. During the interview, go into detail on how a job is posted, reviewed, and the pay compensation.
6. Prepare a list of job-related questions and stick to this list for each and every interview. Use questions which you develop and which pertain to specifics of the particular job for which you are interviewing and sample questions provided in Appendix III.
7. Once you have decided on 10 to 15 general and

specific job-related questions you plan to use in the interview, you should transfer them to an interview form. (See Appendix II for an example of an interview form.) By taking this action, you will ensure that all candidates are asked the same questions. It will also provide you with a means of rating candidates and for taking notes after the interview is completed. The notes you have taken on each interview can then be compared when all interviews have been completed.

8. One last caution - ensure that you keep in mind only the important job elements.

DON'T MAKE OVERALL JUDGMENTS. The danger of making an immediate, overall judgment about an applicant is that it tends to be reflected in each of the specifics. This is commonly called the "halo effect." The result of the halo effect is that the applicant gets about the same rating score on every aspect of the interview. For example, on a rating scale of 1 to 5 you might suspect the halo effect if a candidate got all 4s or 5s. To avoid such problems, you'll want to pay close attention to everything the applicant says and then make careful, independent ratings of the applicant's response to each question.

DON'T MAKE QUICK EVALUATIONS AND DECISIONS. There's considerable evidence that interviewers often make quick decisions about the applicant within the first two to three minutes of the interview. Such quick evaluations defeat the purpose of the interview which is to draw out information from the applicant on which a decision can be made.

DON'T ACCENTUATE THE NEGATIVE.

Evidence suggests that interviewers may place greater emphasis on negative or "bad" information than on positive information about applicants. If negative information dominates their evaluations, they're likely to make snap decisions about applicants or only pay attention to a small portion of what the applicant said. This, too, defeats the purpose of the interview.

DON'T MAKE IRRELEVANT COMPARISONS.

How an interviewer rates an applicant tends to be influenced by what he or she thought of previous applicants. For example, a job applicant might receive relatively lower evaluations if preceded by a number of "low quality" applicants. The only way to avoid this is to remind yourself to evaluate each applicant against the job elements rather than against other applicants.

B. Steps to Take During the Interview

1. Put the applicant at ease.
2. Discuss briefly the job duties, benefits, and the company itself, including any physical requirements, such as lifting, etc. For higher level positions, it's advisable to provide all applicants you plan to interview with a copy of the job description of the position prior to the actual interview.
3. Ask general questions first, then specific job-related questions.
4. Allow the applicant to talk freely and supply the information you need.

5. Avoid giving reactions to the applicant's comments.
6. Don't ramble on. Allow the applicant to talk more than half of the time.
7. Keep the interview, the applicant, and yourself on track! Remember, the purpose of the interview is to find a qualified worker.
8. Be alert to any glossed-over areas (by either yourself or the applicant). If certain aspects of the job cause people to leave, mention them now. Better the person refuses the job than start and quit.
9. Avoid making moral judgments. Regardless of how the interviewer feels about statements made by the candidate, his/her personal feelings should not enter the picture. The importance of creating a sympathetic, permissive atmosphere cannot be overemphasized. Criticism by the interviewer, either spoken or implied, will discourage the candidate from talking freely.
10. Avoid leading questions. Leading questions should never be used in the interview. They give the candidate a ready-made answer and an opportunity to avoid embarrassing situations. If, for example, the interviewer asks, "You left school to go to work?" it is easy for the candidate to answer, "yes," even though the real reason might have been expulsion.
11. Let the applicant know the interview is almost over so that he/she can add any further information.

C. Steps to Take After the Interview

1. Make concise notes on each application. (Try not to do this while the applicant is being interviewed.)
2. Analyze your information and personal reactions immediately.
3. Check to see whether or not the information obtained in the interview was pertinent to the requirements of the job.
4. After the last interview, compare your ratings and notes for each applicant and make your selection while the information on each applicant is still clear in your mind.
5. Retain the interview rating forms for each applicant. This information may prove invaluable if your selection is challenged at some later date.

V. Equal Employment Opportunity Concerns

A. Sexist questions **that should not be used during an interview:**

- ! Are you married/single/divorced/separated/widowed?
- ! Do you get along well with other women/men?
- ! How old is your youngest child?
- ! Who will watch your children while you are at work?
- ! You're not a women's libber/male chauvinist are you?

- ! Are you supplementing your household income?
- ! What type of birth control do you practice?
- ! What does your husband/wife do for a living?
- ! Why aren't you married?
- ! Will your husband/wife mind if you have to travel on business trips?
- ! Do you expect to be transferred because of your husband's/wife's job?

B. Racist, ageist and other inappropriate questions that **should not be asked any applicant during an interview.**

- ! How do you feel about having to work with members of a different race?
- ! If your supervisor should be white; would that create any problems for you?
- ! Are "you people" good at working with numbers?
- ! Did you ever receive public assistance?
- ! What do your parents do for a living?
- ! Do you have any brothers or sisters?
- ! That's an unusual name. What nationality are you?
- ! Were you born here?

- ! Can you lift 20 pounds on a regular basis?
- ! Do you have people in the "old country?"
- ! Have you ever drawn unemployment insurance?
- ! Are you active in any church groups?
- ! What church do you attend?
- ! You wear a cross; are you Catholic?
- ! Do you miss work to attend services on holidays?
- ! Do you think you'll get along with younger people in the office?
- ! Would you be willing to work for a person who is younger than you are?
- ! Are you on any type of medication?
- ! Are you physically able to do this job?

Most of the above are excellent examples of potentially discriminatory questions. What we need to know is if the person is going to be reliable, on time, and able to carry out the tasks and assignments of the position.

A primary goal of an interview is to ensure that all applicants have a fair opportunity to be hired in a job that may represent such things as: their sole income, relief from the pressure of debt, a chance for a relief from the frustration of receiving public welfare or food stamps, a decent life, paying for a child's education, or career

advancement.

**WHEN THIS MUCH IS AT STAKE, THE
APPLICANT OFTEN SCRUTINIZES THE
INTERVIEWER DURING THE INTERVIEW
PROCESS.**

If the interviewer misses information, misinterprets verbal or nonverbal communication, or appears to be disinterested, an applicant may target any of these questions as discriminatory and file a complaint or even a suit against the employer.

As a consequence, one of our basic employment tools - the employment interview - is under increasing attack. An interview usually last less than an hour in which one must assess ability, stability, integrity, motivation, honesty willingness to work, and compatibility. These areas are prime targets for subjective judgments based on biases or prejudices. By following the outlined systematic approach to developing your selection interview, you can reduce the possibility of wasted time, money and energy, loss in production, ill will, or a discrimination complaint.

**C. Employment Decisions Based on Non-Job Related
Factors**

Since it is your aim to be an "Equal Opportunity Employer," no hiring decision should be based on the following factors unless it can clearly be demonstrated that such factors are a Bona Fide Occupational Qualification (BFOQ):

- ! Age
- ! Date of birth

- ! Previous address
- ! Length of time at present residence
- ! Religion
- ! Name of priest, rabbi or minister
- ! Father's surname
- ! Mother's surname
- ! Maiden name
- ! Ages of children
- ! Number of children
- ! Marital status
- ! Who will care for the children
- ! Spouse's place of employment
- ! Spouse's residence
- ! Parents' residence
- ! Parents' place of employment
- ! Whether applicant owns or rents residence
- ! Loans or financial obligations
- ! Wage attachments
- ! Personal bankruptcies
- ! Arrest records
- ! Legal convictions, unless relevant to the job
- ! Foreign languages spoken, unless required for job
- ! Prior use of unemployment insurance
- ! Race
- ! Memberships in social or fraternal organizations
- ! Attitudes toward geographic relocation, unless required by the job
- ! Credit rating
- ! Negative report by previous employer, unless applicant is given an opportunity to rebut
- ! Pregnancy
- ! Unwed motherhood/fatherhood
- ! Lack of separate restrooms or facilities in your place of business
- ! Physical disabilities (without exploring all reasonable

possibilities for accommodation)

D. Irrelevant Applicant Information

In order to gain information without asking specific questions, many employers use the "tell me about yourself," approach hoping that the applicant will tell all about husband, kids, working on weekends, etc.

There is a danger in this approach. For example, say the applicant is a woman who tells you she is divorced and has children. You hire another person, perhaps equally qualified, who is single. The first applicant, desperate for the job, becomes angry and files a complaint saying that you learned during the interview that she was divorced and has children and you refused to hire her for that reason. Even though you did not ask for the information, the fact is the information came to light during the interview. If she sued, it would be up to you to prove that it was volunteered and not used as a basis of discriminatory actions. Therefore, it is your responsibility and in your own best interest as an interviewer to keep the applicant from volunteering information which has no bearing on the selection process.

E. What to do When Irrelevant Information is Offered

First, stop the flow of information and tell the applicant not to bring up the subject again. Courteously explain your reason for interrupting and assure the applicant that your company does not base its hiring practices on that particular subject area. You might specifically state that a decision to hire is never based on age, sex, race or whatever subject was brought up. Be sure that the information which came up stays with you - the interviewer - and is not mentioned to others in your office

or entered anywhere on the application.

F. Common Fears of Various Applicants

These are a few of many fears that may create apprehension or dread of a job interview:

- ! A minority applicant might feel that the employment system is pro-white; that if hired, it's only "because they have to be hired."
- ! A white male might feel that he's best qualified but not hired because a company has to meet an Affirmative Action plan.
- ! A disabled applicant may fear that the employer thinks he or she is "a poor health risk" or will be rejected because of appearance.
- ! Any applicant may feel he or she will be judged on looks and personality, not ability.
- ! A woman might believe she has to be outstanding to compete with the average male.

Remember, that whether you like or dislike the applicant may or may not be relevant to the job you have in mind. While personality and appearance are important in some positions, the primary consideration should be the person's ability to do the job.

G. Don't Assume . . . Ask Specific Questions

If you want to know if the person is going to be at work every day and on time, don't assume that all people who have children or who enjoy alcoholic beverages will not

be reliable. Explain the job and what the employees can expect from the company. Then state your expectations and ask the applicants if there are reasons they cannot meet your expectations. For example:

"We are open to the public from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and because of a small staff, it's important that everyone is here daily and on time. Will you be able to commit to being at work on time and on a regular basis?"

BE SURE YOUR REQUIREMENTS ARE REASONABLE AND ARE REQUIRED OF EACH APPLICANT FOR THE SAME PARTICULAR JOB.

CAUTION: If your job takes one to two weeks of training and your employees rarely stay over six months, using the excuse not to hire someone who expects to be transferred with a spouse within a year (particularly someone in the military service) would put you on shaky ground with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

YOU OR YOUR SUPERVISORS CAN DISCRIMINATE UNINTENTIONALLY. The basic rule is, if you don't need to know, don't ask. If the information is not related to job performance, you don't need to know. (Remember, sensitive data relating to ethnic and racial tallies should be kept separate from records used to make hiring decisions and such data is gathered after the hire.)

APPENDIX I

SAMPLE JOB DESCRIPTION

TITLE: Administrative Assistant

DUTIES OF JOB:

1. Provides support services to the department manager.
2. Types confidential correspondence, other material from handwritten copy, primary or semi-finished source material, dictating machine recordings or shorthand notes.
3. Maintains confidential files of items such as: salaries, expenses, personnel records, as well as routine correspondence.
4. Receives, opens, sorts and screens incoming mail.
5. Places, answers, screens and directs telephone calls, taking messages as required.
6. Places, answers, screens and directs office visitors.
7. Schedules meetings and appointments using judgment in determining priorities.
8. May operate various office equipment.
9. May be required to make travel reservations and arrangements for accommodations during an itinerary.

10. May keep budgetary records, calculating balances and expenditures from different budgets.
11. May be required to compose correspondence.
12. May be required to train and supervise or direct subordinate employees.
13. Performs other related duties as assigned.

TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE

High school graduation, three years of office experience or an equivalent combination of education and/or experience.
Familiarity with office equipment such as: adding machine, copy machine, calculator, etc.

RESPONSIBILITY

Maintains contacts throughout the company and outside the company of a confidential level. May organize and administer office routine; train or direct activities of other employees. May be required to use independent judgment in interpreting company rules and policies. Exercises supervision.

WORKING CONDITIONS:

Normal office conditions prevail.

REMEMBER THESE THREE POINTS IN WRITING A JOB DESCRIPTION:

1. Does it say what is expected of the employee?

2. Does it indicate the responsibilities/travel, type of machine to be operated, general working conditions, etc.
3. Does it describe the skills/training and/or experience needed for the job?

APPENDIX II

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE FORM

ORAL BOARD RATING FORM

CANDIDATE'S NAME _____

POSITION INTERVIEWED FOR _____

INTERVIEWER'S NAME _____

DATE INTERVIEWED _____

GENERAL COMMENTS: Your rating of the candidate should be based on your observations as to how well the candidate responds to the questions contained in this rating form as they relate to the position in question. You are encouraged to review the significant duties and responsibilities of the position thoroughly, prior to beginning the interview.

QUESTIONS ASKED THE CANDIDATE

1. Comments by rater: Rating: __Weak __Satisfactory __More than satisfactory __Outstanding
2. Comments by rater: Rating: __Weak __Satisfactory __More than satisfactory __Outstanding
3. Comments by rater: Rating: __Weak __Satisfactory __More than satisfactory __Outstanding
4. Comments by rater: Rating: __Weak __Satisfactory __More than satisfactory __Outstanding
5. Comments by rater: Rating: __Weak __Satisfactory __More than satisfactory __Outstanding

6.

Comments by rater:

Rating: __Weak __Satisfactory __More than satisfactory __Outstanding

OVERALL RATING:

The overall rating of the applicant must be based on your judgment of how well they responded to the questions used in the oral board interview, and must be related to only job relevant factors to the position in question.

Item A

Based on the oral board review, I consider the applicant for this position as being:

1. _____ Much less than satisfactory
2. _____ Less than satisfactory
3. _____ Satisfactory
4. _____ More than satisfactory
5. _____ Much more than satisfactory
6. _____ Outstanding

Item B

What do you consider as the applicant's strong points for this position?

Item C

What do you consider as the applicant's weak points for this position?

Item D

In Item A above you rated this applicant on a scale of 1 to 6. What are the reasons for the rating you gave?

Rater's Signature _____ Date _____

(Representing Firms or Organizations)

APPENDIX III

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

GENERAL

- ! How do you feel about traveling?
- ! How do you see this position as fitting into your career plans?
- ! How would you react if you were required to perform tasks involving detail on a reoccurring basis?
- ! Have you been in a work situation where you have had to carry out or complete a project from start to finish? Describe.
- ! How do you react to criticism?
- ! How do you feel about working in a job situation where there are definite constraints, i.e., laws, regulations, policies?
- ! If you had several tasks to do, how would you determine the order or priority?
- ! How would you approach coordinating activities with different levels of management to gain their cooperation in working toward a common goal, even though you would not have line authority in that area?
- ! How do you react when things do not move as rapidly as you would like?

EDUCATION AND TRAINING QUESTIONS

- ! Have you taken any courses or home study programs relating to your field of work?
- ! What other learning experiences have you had that would be of benefit to you on this job?

EXPERIENCE QUESTIONS

- ! What did you like best about your previous job? Least?
- ! What challenges were there?
- ! What did you find most difficult to learn on that job? (Or specify any particular position shown on the application.)
- ! Which of your jobs helped you grow professionally? Why?
- ! Why did you leave your last job? Could you be more specific? Or, why are you planning on leaving?
- ! What are your short- and long-term employment goals?
- ! Have you done any kind of community work which relates to this job?
- ! How do you think your experience has prepared you for this job?
- ! Tell me something about your work with your supervisor, co-workers, subordinates.

- ! In what accomplishments on your last job did you take the most pride?

INTEREST AND MOTIVATION QUESTIONS

- ! What aspects of (*job title*) are of most interest to you?
- ! What experiences have you had that you feel can be useful to you as a (*job title*)?
- ! What aspects of being a (*job title*) do you feel would be most difficult for you?

ATTITUDE QUESTIONS:

- ! Do you feel all segments of the public react to (*company*) in the same way?
- ! What qualifications do you feel are important for being a good (*job title*)?
- ! What kinds of things do you feel (*company*) employees can do to help promote better (*company*), as well as, community relations?
- ! What personal characteristics do you feel are important for (*job title*) to have in dealing with minorities, hostile claimants, laboring class of workers, etc.?

JUDGMENT IN DECISION-SITUATIONAL PROBLEMS

This factor can be tested by giving the applicant a hypothetical case with which they may be faced while on the actual job. The problem should involve the applicant taking

the most effective action possible based on his or her understanding of the situation. The applicant's decisions and actions should produce results consistent with the goals of the company. The interviewer(s) should stress that he/she is not too concerned with the technical correctness of the applicant's

ideas. What he/she is looking for are signs of completeness, resourcefulness, and common sense.

EVALUATING RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS

After developing questions to be used in the job interview which are job related, it is also a good idea to set standards for rating responses. Here are some examples:

Question

Tell us why you are interested in this position? What do you feel this position has to offer you?

Response Evaluation

Best answers would indicate that the candidate has thought about, and will be interested in, the work to be performed. They think they would like the job or that the work itself would benefit them.

Poorer answers would pertain to benefits such as better hours, better pay, prestige, location, etc.

Worst answers would indicate that the candidate is just looking for a job. Maybe they're out of a job or maybe they don't like the one they have. Their answers do not indicate much interest in the type of work to be done or even the fringe benefits offered.

Question

Putting modesty aside, what do you think you have to offer to this position? (Encourage the candidate to relate this to their past work experiences.)

Response Evaluation

Good answers should indicate that people believe they do have something to contribute. They have confidence in themselves. They give the impression that they would do their best. The qualities they mention should be qualities which would contribute to success on the job.

Poorer answers would be no answer or the mention of qualities which would be of doubtful value. There is little or no indication that the candidates themselves believe they would do a good job.

Question

What specific situations can you tell me about in which you were required to use tact and diplomacy? How did you handle the matter? (Follow with more detailed questions or encourage the applicant to relate other incidents, if desired.)

Response Evaluation

It is hoped that good candidates will have had sufficient experience so that they can think of specific situations and describe how they handled them. If they cannot think of any situations, or if the situations seem inappropriate to the question, that would be a poor answer. If they describe an appropriate situation, the interviewer must decide to what

extent their actions indicate tact or diplomacy.

In judging tact and diplomacy, note also how the candidate responds to the two questions which follow.

Good answers should indicate realistic knowledge and objectivity or, perhaps, the wide individual differences to be found in successful job performance.

Poor answers should indicate that the candidate views the job from a narrow and limited perspective. Their reasons should be good reasons and not personal or specious reasons.

Question

What qualities and characteristics would you expect to find in an employee in a position like this one? Why do you think these qualities are necessary?

Response Evaluation

This is probably the most difficult question of all to answer. Can the candidates discuss themselves without losing their dignity? Or, do they demean themselves? From what you have been able to learn, are they being realistic about weaknesses?

It is also important to note how they express their answer. Are they matter-of-fact or emotional? Do they have normal pride and self-confidence without being a braggart? Or, is it fairly obvious that their attitude toward themselves is immature.

Question

What do you believe are your personal weaknesses? What have you done to correct or control these? (But, emphasize that you are not trying to embarrass the candidate.)

Response Evaluation

In all respects, candidates should indicate a realistic and well-considered attempt to make themselves better qualified (or "improve" themselves) in their work endeavors. Do their answers reflect that they have thought about their choice of jobs and their future?

Poor answers would probably indicate that they are shortsighted and unambitious, or unwilling to make the effort necessary to advance career-wise. They would probably reveal that they have never thought seriously or realistically about the future. If candidates feel that they are already eminently qualified, this, too, would probably be a poor answer.